Two who saw Rev "Head up" Pulb - Sumter, Wayne Chastain 4/5/68 MFC 44-1987 Subc

King clutched at his neck as he fell.

Jones said he looked over his shoulder, and about 25 feet away he saw a man jump out of some bushes and run.

"He had something white on his face," Jones said.

Eskridge said he didn't see the man running, because he concentrated his energies on getting up the stairs to help King.

"His eyes were closed, and I thought he was dead then," Eskridge said.

His voice broke.

"He was so full of love, so full of life, and full of hope. How on earth could this have happened?" Eskridge asked.

Standing with King on the balcony several feet away was the Rev. Jesse Jackson, an SCLC staff member and King's chief organizer of economic boycotts of white businesses.

"Jesse went and got a blanket and put it over him. If Dr. King ever said anything after he was shot he must have said it to Rev. Jackson. But I don't believe he did."

Eskridge said he was in Dr. King's suite at 5:30 p.m. and watched Walter Cronkite's telecast including his report about a compromise discussion in the judge's chamber in Memphis. Eskridge was present, but King was not. This prompted King to say:

"He (Cronkite) is telling me something I don't know."

Eskridge said he then explained to King the fact that Federal Judge Bailey Brown had taken the suggested plan under advisement.

Eskridge said he heard the shot, but at the time he thought it was a firecracker.

At 7:20 p.m., Paul Hess, assistant administrator of St. Joseph Hospital, called a press conference in the emergency room where a group of national network and local newsmen waited a report on King's condition, believing he was still alive.

"At 7 p.m. Dr. Martin Luther King expired in the emergency room of St. Joseph Hospital of a gunshot wound in the neck," he said.

A cordon of city police and sheriff deputies—armed with shotguns—formed a circle around the emergency room.

Dr. Andrew Young, executive vice president of the SCLC remained in the operating room.

Several times Young would come to where the reporters were waiting and when he tried to answer questions, his voice would break and he would go back into the area of the operating room. His eyes were red.

Jones, when asked what effect King's death would have on the Negro community in Memphis, said: "I don't think I had better comment on that."

This was after the announcement of King's death.

Eskridge replied to the question:

"I am afraid it will undo what he always hoped for and worked for—peace among Americans. He actually thought that was possible, you know."